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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

DOS review completed

NSA review completed

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11 December 1966

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

The Viet Cong mounted two sharp attacks this weekend. The Liberation Front radio meanwhile rejects suggestions that the Christmas truce be extended.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Heavy casualties were suffered by US and Communist soldiers in a brief clash in Tay Ninh Province early today (Para. 1). A South Vietnamese Army base camp and command post was attacked by Communist troops ten miles northwest of Hue, resulting in friendly losses of 24 killed and 85 wounded (Para. 2). US Navy river patrol boats and armed helicopters killed 15 Viet Cong and sank 28 sampans in the Mekong Delta on 11 December (Para. 3). For the third time in six weeks, Viet Cong guerrillas attacked the Long Binh ammunition dump 13 miles northeast of Saigon, causing two explosions which destroyed nearly two tons of explosives (Para. 4). Viet Cong frogmen have been unsuccessful in four recent attempts to blow up strategic bridges in the Saigon area (Para. 5). A Viet Cong battalion-size force attacked a South Vietnamese training camp and captured 184 trainees and killed 15 others (Para. 6). A battalion-size Viet Cong force ambushed a South Vietnamese company 20 miles west of Saigon on 9 December (Para. 7). Thua Thien Province has been isolated by road and rail from Quang Nam and Quang Tri provinces owing to Viet Cong interdiction efforts (Paras. 8-9). Soviet ammunition [redacted] has been identified among enemy materiel captured during Operation ATTLEBORO in Tay Ninh Province (Para. 10).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

A draft constitution is being circulated in the Constituent Assembly (Paras. 1-4). The government's prompt response to Tran Van Van's assassination has apparently lessened its political impact in Saigon (Paras. 5-6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

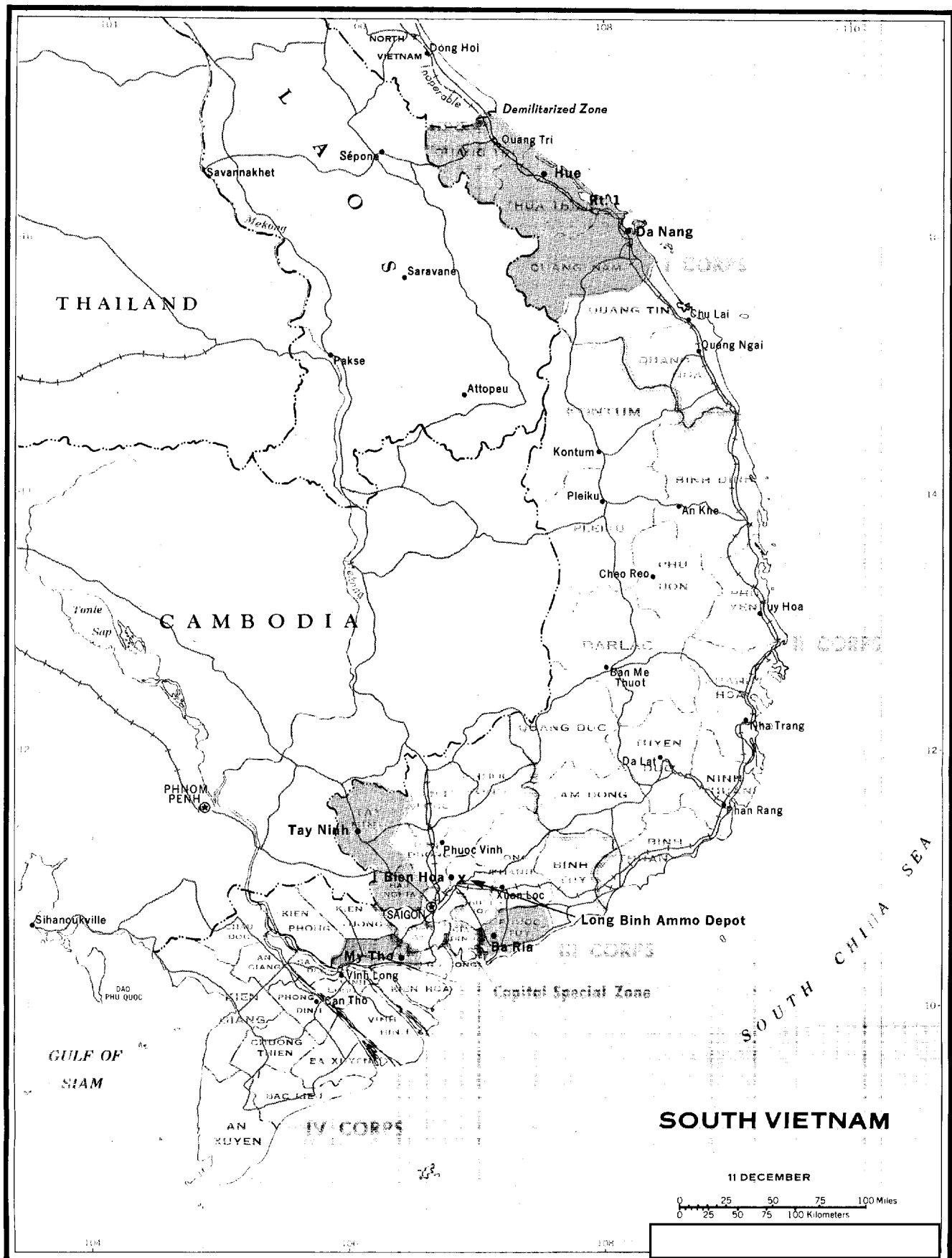
V. Communist Political Developments: The Viet Cong have rejected an extension of the Christmas truce to Tet (Para. 1). Hanoi has absolved China of obstructing Soviet shipments (Paras. 2-4).

VI. Other Major Aspects: There is additional evidence of North Vietnamese presence in northeastern Cambodia (Paras. 1-4). Cambodian complicity is unclear (Paras. 5-6).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A platoon of the US 1st Infantry Division engaged an enemy force of unknown size on 11 December in Tay Ninh Province, about 10 miles northeast of Tay Ninh city. During the brief clash, 18 Americans were killed and 10 wounded. Enemy losses were reported as 26 killed and one automatic weapon captured.

2. On 10 December a Communist force attacked a South Vietnamese regimental command post and a battalion base camp about 10 miles northwest of Hue in northern Thua Thien Province with small arms and mortar fire. Friendly casualties were reported as 24 killed (1 US), 85 wounded (4 US), 12 missing, and more than 100 weapons captured. Six enemy soldiers were reported killed and four weapons captured.

3. American patrol boats and armed helicopters killed 15 khaki-uniformed Viet Cong and destroyed 28 sampans in a Mekong Delta canal battle early on 11 December. Two US Navy river patrol boats located a group of 40 sampans and a large group of Viet Cong on the nearby canal bank near My Tho in Dinh Tuong Province. The Viet Cong fired on the boats which were later assisted by two US helicopters. American casualties in the action were light, with only two reported wounded. The patrol boats were only slightly damaged.

4. For the third time in six weeks, Viet Cong guerrillas attacked the US ammunition dump at Long Binh, 13 miles northeast of Saigon, early on 10 December. The guerrillas penetrated the dump's perimeter, fired on guards, and set explosive charges that destroyed two ammunition storage pads. An unexploded satchel charge was found in a third area. One American was slightly wounded. A total of one and one half tons of small arms ammunition and 80 175-mm, propellant charges were destroyed.

5. On 10 December a South Vietnamese soldier at the Phu Long bridge, six miles north of Saigon, spotted a mine floating on a camouflaged makeshift

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raft. The mine, which was brought ashore and disarmed, consisted of 880 pounds of TNT and a clock timing device. This is the fourth such mine found on the Saigon River during the past week. This recent series of attempts on Saigon area bridges, if successful, could have resulted in substantial friendly losses. The attempted explosions would have severed the strategic Saigon - Bien Hoa highway which during daylight hours is filled with military traffic.

6. Late on 9 December an estimated Viet Cong battalion attacked two South Vietnamese Regional Force companies engaged in a training exercise at the Van Kiep Training Center, one mile northwest of Ba Ria in coastal Phouc Tuy Province. The guerrillas captured 184 of the trainees, who had only blank cartridges in their weapons. In addition to those captured, initial reports indicate 15 others were killed and a total of 82 weapons seized. Enemy losses are unknown. A South Vietnamese Marine battalion was sent to the area as a reaction force. However, no contact with the Viet Cong battalion has been reported.

7. A South Vietnamese Regional Force company operating in an area about 20 miles west of Saigon in Hau Nghia Province was ambushed by an estimated Viet Cong battalion on 9 December. Casualty figures list 15 South Vietnamese killed, three wounded, and 12 missing. One 60-mm. mortar and 24 individual weapons were reported lost. A total of five Viet Cong were reported killed. A reaction force sent to the area failed to locate the enemy force.

Viet Cong Interdiction Efforts in the Northern Provinces

8. A recent increase in Viet Cong incidents along Route 1 in the northern provinces of Thua Thien and Quang Nam may indicate an effort by the Viet Cong to isolate certain towns and/or areas. The Da Nang/Hue section of the National Railroad was cut in three separate locations during the past week. This differs from the usual practice of cutting the line in one place, then waiting until it is repaired before cutting it again at another location.

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9. A series of well-coordinated attacks on three highway bridges on Route 1 has effectively cut off Thua Thien Province from Quang Tri and Quang Nam provinces. One of the three strategic bridges was destroyed and the other two seriously damaged. All three are impassable.

Viet Cong Military Intelligence Bureau to Hold Congress

10. The Viet Cong Military Intelligence Bureau of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) notified a subordinate unit in northern Tay Ninh Province of plans for a "bureau-wide party congress," according to a recently intercepted message. The congress is to be held on 24 and 25 December, during the Christmas cease-fire period, to elect a new executive committee. The subordinate was instructed to conduct elections for delegates to the congress on the basis of one delegate for every seven personnel.

Russian Ammunition Identified in Tay Ninh Province

11. Examination of ammunition captured by American troops during the recently concluded Operation ATTLEBORO in Tay Ninh Province has revealed the presence of two recently manufactured Soviet items. Propellants for antitank mines and 7.62-mm. cartridges [redacted] were captured. These are the most recent Soviet items observed among captured materiel in South Vietnam.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A draft constitution is being circulated in the Constituent Assembly with the apparent support of some 40 delegates representing a variety of political factions.
2. The draft outlines a modified presidential system of government, under which an elected president appoints a prime minister who is responsive to the lower house of the legislature. The draft also establishes a host of executive and judicial institutions, including a "special court" with the legal power to impeach the president and other high-ranking officials.
3. A "bill of rights" section prohibits the "propagation of Communist ideology" and specifies that those who subvert Vietnam's "democratic system of government" lose their rights as citizens. The rights of minorities to maintain their own customs is also guaranteed in this section.
4. The draft provides for the promulgation of a constitution in early February and a presidential election within three months. It also specifies that the present Constituent Assembly will function until a lower house of representatives is elected, which is to occur within three months after the presidential elections.

Tran Van Van's Assassination

5. The government's prompt response to last week's assassination of southern leader Tran Van Van has apparently lessened its political impact in Saigon.
6. The US Embassy reports that Prime Minister Ky's 9 December eulogy of Van, and the public admission by one of the assassins that he was acting under Viet Cong orders, has helped allay the natural suspicions of southern politicians that the government might be implicated in the murder. The embassy notes that it is clear that these suspicions have not been entirely put to rest, but that it now appears that the assassination will not have major political repercussions.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A Viet Cong radio commentary of 10 December rejected the possibility of extending the Christmas truce to Tet, the lunar new year holiday which the Vietnamese will celebrate next year from 8 to 12 February. The broadcast denounced those individuals who speak of peace in Vietnam as "intentionally or unintentionally supporting their (US) aggressive scheme in Vietnam and directly encouraging their aggressive acts." The Viet Cong condemned British leaders for seeing such prolongation of the truce as a "dawning" of a prospect for peace, and reprimanded "some world religious and organization leaders for not understanding the Vietnam situation as well as Sihanouk, De Gaulle, and Bertrand Russell" who are "well informed" on Vietnam.

Hanoi Absolves China of Obstruction

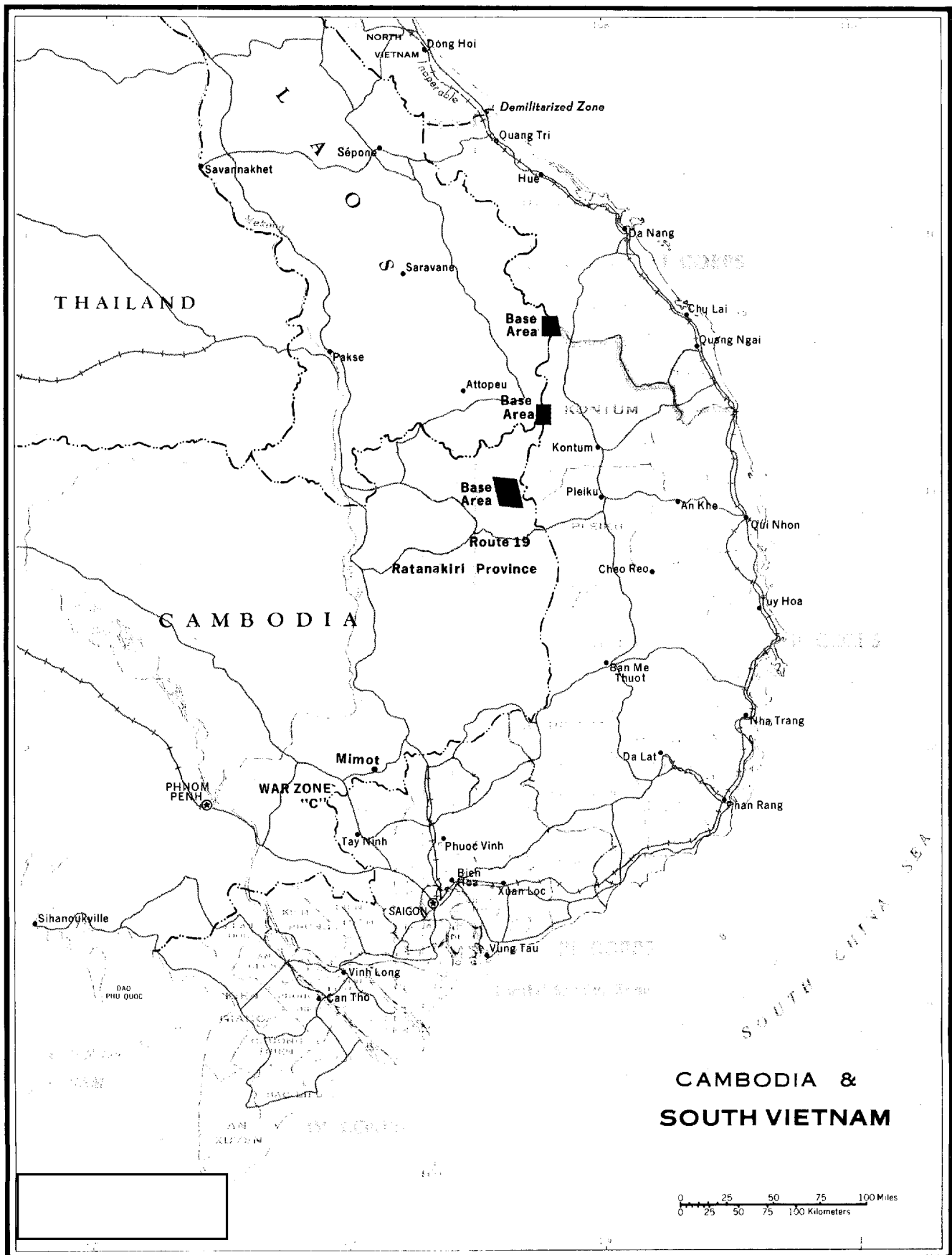
2. Hanoi has once again absolved the Chinese Communists of obstructing the passage of Soviet and other bloc goods on their way through China to North Vietnam. The Hanoi international news service declared on 10 December that the North Vietnamese Government "has many times affirmed that China has always helped in the transit, on schedule, of all goods given to Vietnam as aid by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries." The broadcast blamed "Western news agencies" for spreading "lies" that China had created difficulties.

3. Although some Chinese harassment of transiting Soviet shipments probably continues, available evidence indicates that the Chinese are still letting the goods through. The Soviets and other bloc sources have from time to time spread stories that China has on occasion actually stopped shipments.

4. Hanoi's latest statement appears to be part of its continuing effort not to become publicly involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute. North Vietnam probably feels that its best interests lie in accepting aid from--and thanking--both sides.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Additional evidence of the presence of North Vietnamese units in northeastern Cambodia has been provided by a recently interrogated North Vietnamese prisoner.

2. The prisoner, who was captured in late November in Kontum Province close to the Cambodian border, stated that he was with the 95th (95 B) North Vietnamese Regiment when it moved into Cambodia in mid-1966. He claimed that the regiment established battalion-size camps on Cambodian territory and trained for two months before deploying into Pleiku Province in South Vietnam.

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4. The North Vietnamese prisoner also stated that his battalion received foodstuffs from a "warehouse" which he believed was stocked by Cambodians. Numerous North Vietnamese prisoners have reported that they received rice from way stations located along the northeastern Cambodian border while infiltrating into South Vietnam.

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Cambodian Complicity

5. The prisoner apparently did not provide any information on the question of the extent to which

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local Cambodian officials are aware of or sanction the presence of Communist bases on Cambodian territory. The area in which the encampments are evidently located is one over which Cambodia has never exercised more than nominal control. There are no Cambodian regular or paramilitary units deployed in the extreme northeast section of Ratanakiri.

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6. Higher Cambodian echelons may be taking another look at the situation in the province, however. The Ratanakiri military subdivision was instructed in late November by Cambodia's Military Region V headquarters to investigate reports that Communist units have established bases in its territory. The subdivision's response, denying that there are any "Viet Cong" forces in its area, represents either an attempt deliberately to mislead its superiors or suggests inadequate intelligence on territory under its nominal jurisdiction.

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